2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

cases are known in modern times however to show that the temptation was real. The reasons for the partial avoidance between men and younger women of the taravād apparently lie in the descent system. Brothers, in common with other men of the taravād, owned the procreative rights in a woman. They shared property and a home with her and were jointly the guardians of her children. With all these shared interests a strong devotion to her was axiomatic and inevitable. Yet brothers must forswear completely the sexual rights in their sister and surrender these to other men. Their formalized, partial avoidance of their younger kinswoman facilitated their continued devotion, side by side with the sexual prohibition. At the same time it completely segregated their interests in her from those of her husbands and thus made tolerable the relationships between brothers-in-law.

Life histories and the behavior of small children suggest that a man's near-conscious attraction toward his sister is a displacement of his earlier and more intense Oedipal attachment to his mother. The latter is apparently repressed at about the age of five, together with similar motives toward other older matrilineal kinswomen. It is uncertain whether Nayar boys developed Oedipal hostility toward their mothers' husbands in early childhood. Perhaps they did, for a child shared his mother's sleeping room until the age of three or four and must have witnessed parental sexual relations. If Oedipal rivalry did develop, much of the hostility seems to have been displaced toward the mother's brothers as they became the significant authorities in the child's world. There is in any case a realistic basis in the mother's brother's hard discipline for aggressive motives toward him. Mythology and religious rites suggest that these two forbidden motives—aggression toward older matrilineal kinsmen and desire for union with matrilineal kinswomen—remained powerful throughout a man's life. It is therefore easy to see why observance of the rules of formal etiquette toward older men and toward younger women of the taravād represented, for a Nayar, the essence of familial piety. The rules counteracted his deepest unsocialized impulses and made possible the harmonious coöperation of the matrilineal group. It is reasonable also to conclude that tensions arising within this natal group must have been eased by the fact that aggression and sexuality, sternly prohibited within the lineage, were encouraged outside it in warfare, organized dueling, and very free sexual relationships.

A man's hidden concern for his sister's sexuality seems to have found an approved outlet in the jealousy with which he was expected to guard her from any taint of contact with low-caste men. Organized

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
North Kerala Nayar

593 will have had different life experiences. One set of siblings may re-
184 ceive property from their father in which their maternal half-siblings
858 have no legal rights. Each set of full siblings will have important
[613] relationships with its own paternal kin. In many respects, therefore, children of the same mother by different fathers have a relationship more comparable to that of the children of two sisters than to that which obtains between full siblings. However, the ties between maternal half-siblings are much stronger than those between paternal half-siblings, who have only a slight relationship. At best, it may be comparable to that between paternal parallel cousins; at worst it may be one of open hostility.

768 A woman's claims on her husband's taravād ceased absolutely with
613 his death. As in Central Kerala, a widow was ceremonially conducted out of her husband's house immediately after the death and could
[764] not enter it thereafter. Husband and wife did not observe death pollu-
[783] tion and did not take part in each other's funeral rites.

Hypergamous marriages in aristocratic lineages bore some re-
591 semblance to those in Central Kerala, although they were never
613 polyandrous. Brahman husbands of royal or chiefly women lived
184 matrilocally at the expense of the palace as in Central Kerala. Royal and chiefly men, however, brought their lower-ranking wives to live on their estates in avunculocal residence. The wife and her children occupied a separate house or else a wing of the palace with separate
[783] cooking arrangements. Husband and wife observed rules of ritual pollution as in hypergamous marriages in the Central kingdoms.

855 THE FATHER AND HIS KIN

613 The kāranavan held ultimate legal control over all his juniors, but
593 their fathers had limited customary rights in and obligations to them. A man was expected to care for his children in his home until they reached puberty or married. Although their own taravād had a legal obligation to maintain them in food and clothing, the father's taravād
[867] customarily supplied their day-to-day needs as a matter of pride. The
[868] father was expected to train his small children in manners and morals, to see that they were taught to write, and to give his sons instruction in cultivation. In return he could ask his children to do small tasks,
593 could exercise domestic discipline while they stayed with him, and
613 could expect kindness and occasional help from them when he was
[584] old. His consent had to be sought for his children's marriages and he often arranged the marriage of his daughter, although he could not
[431] override her kāranavan's wishes. Over and above their customary

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWII Kerala AWII
Thandans

his presence there to the others. I enquired from my informant, Panju, if this were still done. As in the case of other polyandrous people whom I had questioned on this point, he laughed heartily at the idea and said that he had never heard of anything like it. According to him, it was usually the woman who decided with whom she should spend the night; the others then stayed out on the verandah or in another room. Even in the older generation, he did not think that anything remotely resembling the leaving of a knife at the door was ever done.

When I discussed the point with one of the interpreters, he told me that in some polyandrous households that he knew, the husband who did not wish to be disturbed when he was with the common wife would leave his clothes lying about in the neighbouring room or on the verandah as a signal to his brothers. An old Thandan woman confirmed this one day when I met her at Shoranur, where she had come to be interviewed by my wife. She added, however, that there was no fast and firm system and that such things varied "from village to village". It could also be said, I suppose, that they differ from household to household. On the whole, however, there does not seem to be a more developed system of signalling in Kerala than anywhere else.

At home, the obligations of the men consist in making a living for the family in whatever profession or occupation they are engaged. Panju and Narayana cultivate the fields and gather the harvest, often assisting their elder brothers or being helped by them. The wife takes on the household chores, such as cooking and keeping the house clean; she also looks after the children as long as she is suckling them, which may be, in common with other Asiatic mothers, for a very long period – two or three years. The fathers will start attending to their offspring when the woman is isolated during the polluting period of her menses, and thus gradually come to know the children better and to influence their upbringing. Dominance at home is determined solely by the personality of one of the fathers, and does not follow seniority in age. It is however always a man who is the head of the household, the woman being treated here, as elsewhere among other polyandrous peoples, as the property of the husbands.

Does the woman enjoy living in polyandry and what are her conjugal obligations towards her mates? I put this question to Panju as I had to others whom I had interviewed in other communities. He was of the opinion that it all depends on how she feels towards the men. Devaki and Kuniyama, while being good wives to Mayadi in the first case, and to Raman in the second, had been bad ones to the younger men of the

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW11 Kerala AW11
Thandans

Feeling That
124 I would obtain more detailed information concerning the children from Nani than from Panju or his brother, Narayana, I proposed one day to interrogate her rather than her husbands. After some initial difficulties, the principal one being that men did not like to let her out of their sight, I did, nevertheless, manage to interview her in the yard of the Appayl Wattakkeh household. Even then, I could see that Panju was uneasy about it. I noticed that all the time he was apparently playing with his favourite son, Kumaran, he cast suspicious and displeased glances in our direction, and attempted to overhear what one of the intrepreters was saying. The other volunteered to help, and took to talking with Panju during these interviews, in order to entertain him and keep him occupied elsewhere. But this was never entirely successful and it was obvious that Panju fundamentally disapproved of my speaking to his wife directly instead of through his or Narayana's intermediary.

I have already remarked how much more pleasant and rewarding I had found it to question the women of Kerala rather than their menfolk. Nani was no exception, and she proved to be much more intelligent and willing in her answers than Panju ever was. Perhaps an explanation of her husband's distaste for my speaking directly to her is to be found in this: he vaguely feared that she would tell me things which she "ought not to", and which he confusedly thought wrong to let me have. Narayana was the same, and although he, too, pretended to play with young Sridaran, it was only an excuse, I think, to remain in the courtyard, to watch us and try and overhear what was being said.

862 Nani was still suckling the two year old Raghavan, her last child. I asked her when and how she would wean it, and she answered that she would do so when she would be two months pregnant again. She [278] would then apply *nux vomica* to her breast nipples and the bitter taste would make the child stop wanting her milk. She said that she obtained the product in the bazaar as a pharmaceutical drug, not as a natural product of the country. Some children were not put off by this method, she added, and for Kumaran she had had to put chicken dung on her nipples and tell him what it was that he was about to eat. In other cases, some mothers beat their children till they stop suckling, but Nani did not like to do this, although she knew that others did.

291 Loin cloths were not put on children until they were in their third [855] year. Before that they were allowed to run about naked. In Nani's [864] opinion, they began to realise that there was a difference of sex only when they were five. (This appeared to me to be somewhat in contradiction with the fact that children received their first clothes two years